

The Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE
presents

A Retrospective Exhibition

Emeline Fairbanks Mem. Library

of

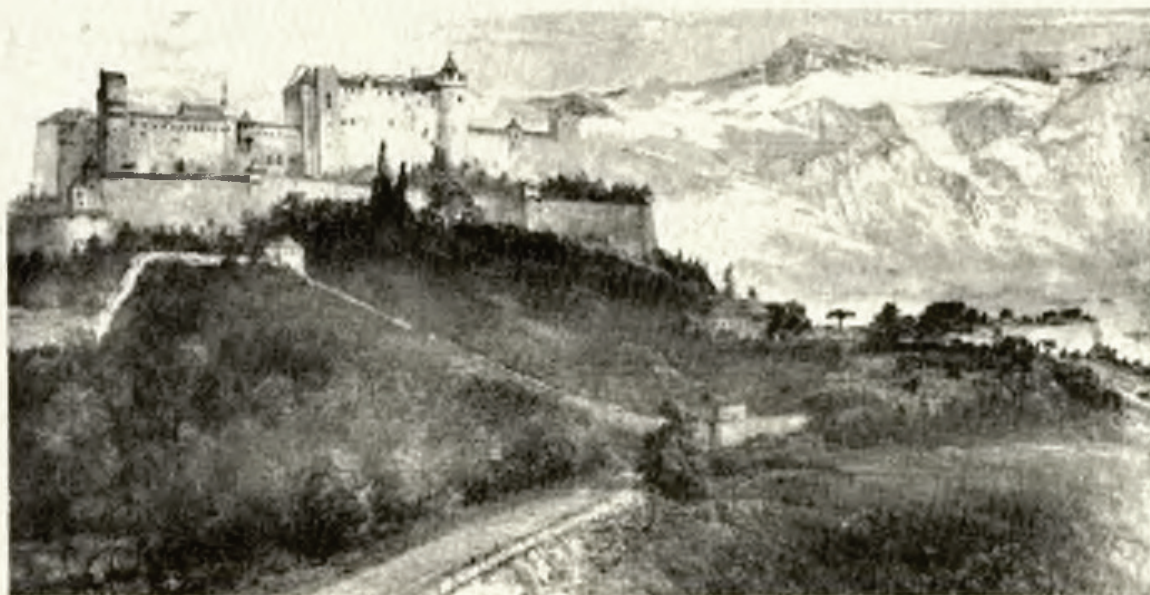
Paintings and Lithographs

by

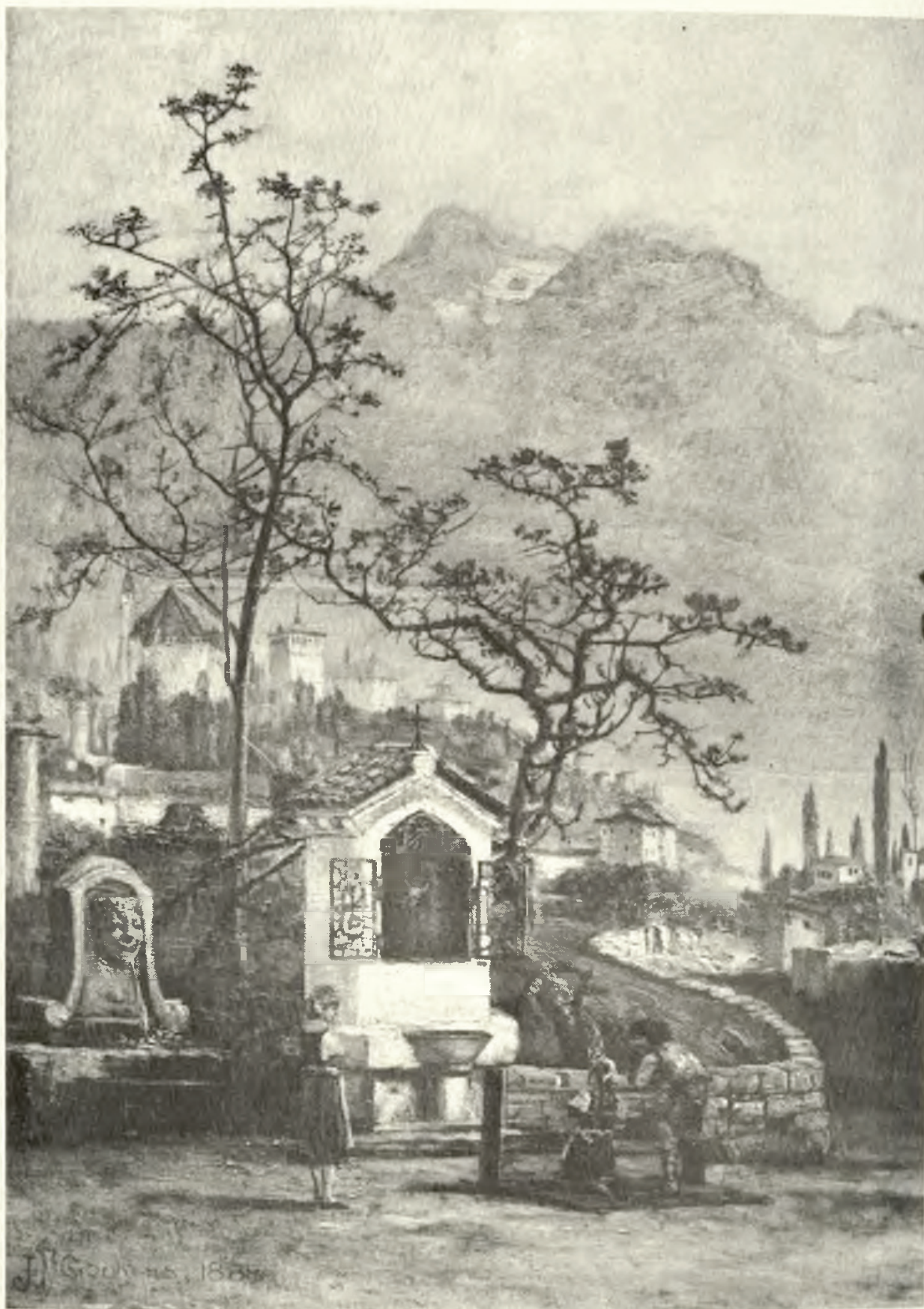
James Farrington Gookins

1840 - 1904

September 11 through October 9, 1966



This is the fourth in a Sesquicentennial Series on Indiana Artists.



View of Italian Village — 1888

JAMES FARRINGTON GOOKINS

1840 - 1904

The Terre Haute born painter, James Farrington Gookins, ranks among the most distinguished Indiana Artists of the 19th century, and it is with considerable pride and pleasure that the Sheldon Swope Art Gallery presents this retrospective exhibition, the fourth in the Sesquicentennial series on Indiana artists. Ten of the paintings included here are from the permanent collection of the Swope Gallery. All of the other works have been generously lent by interested individuals and agencies whose cooperation has made it possible to assemble an extensive cross-section of this master's work.

Gookins was a prolific painter and a dynamic but restless personality. His works, as shown in this exhibition, include portraits, picturesque scenes of life along the river banks in mid-western America, mountain landscapes set either in Colorado or in Alpine regions of Europe and, in marked contrast, a number of interesting but rather enigmatic, fanciful paintings portraying fairies impishly frolicking amidst thick clusters of colorful flower blossoms. In addition, he sketched convincing scenes of living experiences, many of which were lithographed and circulated and served as visual evidence of events of the day. His works speak well for themselves.

However, Gookins merits special attention today, for his life and his work reflect clearly so much of the tragic conflict which colored that otherwise dynamic period of change and growth here in America during the last third of the 19th century. It was the Victorian age, an era at once nostalgically romantic and technologically conscious, looking backward to distant times and far off places yet simultaneously future-oriented. For although gripped by a felt need to prepare itself culturally and to create an image of its own tradition, it also manifested a passionate urge to discover and a daring will to explore. Essentially, this was an age which neurotically tugged at itself, with one foot insecurely planted in the past and the other feverishly pulling forward into the future. The possibility of sudden success was always tempting though the risks were great and often denied fulfillment of ambition. It is in this sense that as a personality, Gookins was truly a child of his restless and unsettled times. His own inner struggle appears to have been rooted in the fact that he sought to integrate the fine arts with the applied arts and thus to bring art into closer alliance with the living environment. Here he was indeed ahead of his time. And although his exploits were at times enviable, his life ambitions were never fully realized, for he was caught between himself and the material demands of his ever-changing world.

Gookins was born in Terre Haute on December 30th, 1840, the son of Judge Samuel Barnes Gookins and Mary Osborn Gookins.

Although we know but very little of his early life, it would seem that he had begun to paint while still in his teens. In 1860 he was a student at Wabash College, but his college career was soon interrupted by the Civil War and in 1861 he joined the 11th Indiana Volunteer Infantry under General Lew Wallace. At this time he did several war sketches which were published in Harper's Weekly. One of these, on display here, is a lithograph, entitled *Remember Buena Vista*. Ill health resulted in his early retirement from the Infantry in 1861. The ensuing five years were busy ones, for he continued to work as an artist-correspondent for Harper's Weekly, returned to Wabash College, studied painting in Cincinnati, and finally opened a painting studio in Chicago. With several other artists, he travelled to Colorado in 1866, sketching and painting various aspects of frontier life. His impressions of the West were recorded in many of the works on display here and particularly in his charming sketch published in Harper's Weekly in 1866 under the title of *Life on the Plains*. By 1869, he was back in Chicago where he helped establish the Chicago Academy of Design. However, in 1870 he returned to Terre Haute, was married to Cora Donnelly and in August of that year left with his bride for Europe to undertake advanced training in art and, more especially, to pursue his romantic interest in the study of the elf kingdom. Undoubtedly he possessed a keenly vivid imagination and his poetic sense, which he had demonstrated earlier both in writing and in painting, was at this time much intensified, and eventually found its outlet in the fanciful subject matter that appears in many of his later and better known paintings such as the *Fairy Marauders* and the *Humming Bird Hunters*. Both of these are included in this exhibition and, incidentally, might well be viewed as proto-surrealist expressions.

Gookins remained in Europe for three years, studying under the celebrated painter Carl Piloty at the Munich Academy. Two of his Munich works, the *Portrait of Mrs. Gookins* and *When the Swallows Homeward Fly*, are included here. While in Europe, he travelled extensively through Bavaria, Switzerland, Italy and France. It was at this time of course that he found inspiration for the themes of his principal paintings to be executed over the subsequent twenty year period.

In 1873, Gookins returned to the United States and from that time forward his activities were centered largely in Chicago. His restlessness no doubt accounts for the fact that on several occasions he returned to Indiana to perform missions of far-reaching consequence. In 1877 he went to Indianapolis where, with the young painter John Love, he established the Indiana School of Art of which he became the first Director. In 1880 he was back in Terre Haute where for a short time he operated his studio. In 1887 he again returned to Indianapolis to serve as Secretary of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument Commission, and it is interesting to note that the German artist, Bruno Schmitz who was awarded the con-

tract for designing the monument, had been an intimate acquaintance of Gookins in his Munich days. The remainder of Gookins' life, however, was spent in Chicago where he focused his attention less on actual painting and more on a variety of civic enterprises which he felt would financially enable him eventually to follow a career exclusively in art. He served as a Director of the Chicago Academy of Design, promoted the development of the Chicago Lake front and played a significant role in initiating and planning for the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893. At the same time he continued to do sketches and articles for magazines and leading art journals, both here and abroad. During 1893 and 1894, in a series of weekly articles dealing with the painting exhibits at the World's Fair and published in the *Chicago Sunday Inter-Ocean*, he had the opportunity to express himself as an art critic before the public. His last years were spent promoting a plan for a subway system for downtown Chicago, a plan which he had personally designed and which in 1904 apparently took him to New York. There, at a moment when he might soon have realized his ambition, he died unexpectedly in his hotel room.

A decade or so after Gookins' death, William Forsyth, one of his first students, wrote the following appraisal of the master: "Mr. Gookins . . . as he expressed it himself, was forever 'chasing the rainbow for a pot of gold' whereby he hoped to become free to paint his own fancies. Alas! the fancies with which his brain teemed were never painted. He never found the pot of gold. The irony of it was that if he had worked out in pictures — and he was capable of doing it — his dreams and imagining he would, without doubt, have won his pot of gold and popularity to boot. He had every qualification necessary."

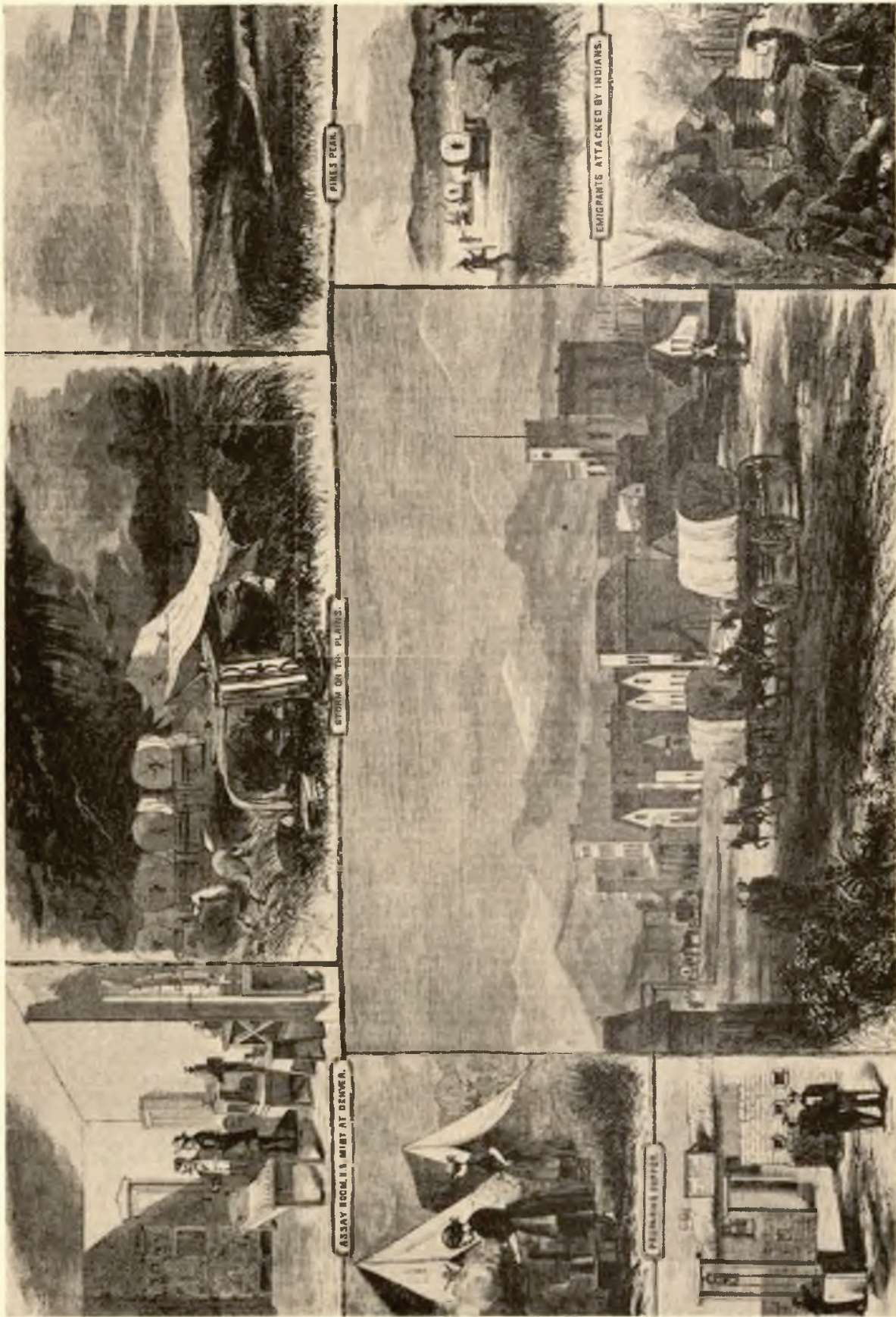
HOWARD E. WOODEN
Director



View of Ville Lindenberg — 1880



Indiana State Fair at Terre Haute (Harper's Weekly, November 2, 1867)



Life on the Plains (Harper's Weekly, October 13, 1866)

CATALOGUE

Paintings

Farm Scene with two Figures — c. 1859

Lent by Mrs. John C. Ross, Terre Haute, Indiana

Landscape with Pond and Cow — c. 1860

Lent by Mrs. George Rose, Indianapolis, Indiana

On the Banks of the Wabash — c. 1860

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

Gift of Miss Florence O'Boyle

Island in the Wabash River — 1860

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

Gift of Mrs. John C. Warren

Portrait of Professor Atlas Minor Hadley — c. 1866

Lent by Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana

Portrait of a Woman — c. 1870

(Attributed to J. F. Gookins)

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

Gift of Fairbanks Memorial Library

Dutch Village — c. 1872

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

Gift of L. M. Johnson

When the Swallows Homeward Fly — c. 1873

Lent by Mrs. Farnsworth Bryant, Louisville, Ky.

Portrait of the Artists' Wife, Cora

Donnelly Gookins — 1873

Lent by The John Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis,
Indiana

Salzburg Castle — 1874

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

Gift of Mr. George Foulkes

Portrait of the Artist's Mother, Mary

Osborn Gookins — c. 1875

Lent by Mrs. Farnsworth Bryant, Louisville, Ky.

View of Ville Lindenberg, Bavaria — 1880

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Wm. E. Bindley, Terre Haute,
Indiana

Front Pool on the St. Vrain River, Colorado — 1880

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

Gift of Mr. Fred Stahl

Landscape — c. 1882

Lent by Mrs. George Rose, Indianapolis, Indiana

Fisherman's Wharf, Bavaria — 1882

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. William B. Johnston, Indianapolis,
Indiana

Road to Arkansas Valley, Colorado — 1882

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

Gift of Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library

Humming Bird Hunters — 1884

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery

Gift of Miss Delphine Bindley

Fairy Marauders — 1887

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery
Anonymous Donor

Mount of the Holy Cross, Colorado — 1887

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery
Gift of Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library

View of Italian Village — 1888

Lent by Mr. Richard Hoberg, Indianapolis, Indiana

Bavarian Chalet — c. 1890

Permanent Collection, Sheldon Swope Art Gallery
Gift of Mr. Fred Stahl

Bavarian Landscape — 1893

Lent by Mrs. Maurice Murphy, Chicago, Illinois

Bavarian Landscape with House — 1898

Lent by Mrs. Farnsworth Bryant, Louisville, Ky.

Lithographs

Remember Buena Vista (Harper's Weekly, June 22, 1861)

Lent by The Willard Library, Evansville, Indiana

Battle of Pea Ridge, Tennessee (Harper's Weekly, May 31, 1862)

Lent by Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library,
Terre Haute, Indiana

Life on the Plains (Harper's Weekly, October 13, 1866)

Lent by the Emeline Fairbanks Memorial Library,
Terre Haute, Indiana

Indiana State Fair at Terre Haute (Harper's Weekly,
November 2, 1867)

Lent by the Vigo County Historical Society, Terre Haute,
Indiana

Fairy Marauders — 1885

Lent by Mrs. Maurice Murphy, Chicago, Illinois



War Time in Bavaria (Harper's Weekly, Dec. 10, 1870)



Humming Bird Hunters — 1884

